The Most Terrible Of Terrors.  
What Did People in middle ages worry about?

By Kate Harrison

It is August 1348. In the village of Melton the day’s work is ending. William brewer puts his scythe over his shoulder and heads home. For the last four days all the villeins at the manor of Melton have been harvesting the bishop of Winchesters wheat. William looks at the evening sky. He is pleased. One fine day will finish the bishop’s work. Then he will bring in his own grain.

William walks slowly down the dusty track which leads to the village. He passes the dismal house of mad Agnes, the lonely old women some people say she is a witch. The door is open, a fire smokes, but the house is empty.

As William enters the village he sees a small group of people standing in front of the church. They are listening to Hugh barley, the Melton carpenter. Their faces are troubled. Hugh is back from Winchester where he is helping to build the new cathedral. He has returned with the strange and worrying news.

Winchester is full of rumours of a terrible plague which is sweeping through Europe. People say the plague started in the east when frogs, snakes and scorpions fell from the sky. They say it spread by the wind. No one can escape. In the towns and villages of Europe bodies lie in the streets. There is no one to bury the dead. The smell of rotting corpses is everywhere. People avoid each other. Parents run away from their children.

William listens but does not believe. Hugh is always returning from Winchester with wild stories. No wonder it is taking so long to build that cathedral! By the time William reaches his cottage he has forgotten the stories. It is almost dark now. Above the fire the evening meal simmers in the pot. His wife, Mary, is carding wool by the fire. His three children sleep soundly on a pile of straw in the corner. William sits down to eat with his wife.

The next morning William goes out of the village to go to the manor of Milton. When he arrives to start his job he hears people inside coughing. His friends who also work at the manor of Milton said that it was the Black Death the worse of all sickness. But William didn’t believe it, he just thought it was nothing and they were just making a big deal. After work on his way home he hears Antonio the arrow maker saying how the Black Death has arrived in the village.

William arrives home and hears coughing; his heart beat goes faster as he’s hoping it’s not the Black Death. He sees his wife, Mary crying saying it is. The next day he finds his child has a swollen bump under his arm his son is crying so is his wife. He needs to find a cure. He wonders into the town and asks Hugh knows about the Black Death. Hugh replies: “I’ve heard that if you mix figs with cooked onions and open the cut with a knife. You have a possibility that it will get better.”

William runs home with the onions and figs, he tells Mary to cook the onions. They get the son and open the cut and stick the onions and figs in. all they can do now is wait and hope. All through the night his son was coughing and throwing up. Williams getting more and more worried. The next day his son swollen bump has gone down but is not a swollen bump, its buboes. His son is cramping up suffering from bad spasms. William still has to go to work to provide food so goes off to work. At work he hears that the mayor had died. The person who came to check the mayor said they should have tried putting a toad or frog on the buboes and wait till the frog explodes. And repeat until the frog doesn’t explode any more.

After work William walks home, he thinks to himself, “I’m going to try the frog cure.” He gets home. His son is dead. He goes to town and tells everyone about what has happened. Fathers and mothers are leaving their children leaving each other, in hope to live. People were whipping themselves hoping god will feel sorry for them. People were burning themselves and killing themselves because they believed god was the cause.

People in the town were catching the disease quickly, most the town was dying. People thought this was horrible and that no one will live.

There was a huge fire in the village the next day. People were burning themselves, all except mad Agnes, she didn’t, she got stoned, and she got stoned for having the diseases. People thought she was the person who had it first.

There is a town meeting because of the deaths. The town meeting was about how they could stop, they had the two cures that William already knew about and tried but there was one which William didn’t know, it was to put human body waste and mix it with herbs and lay on your buboes. There was a big discussion about how the Black Death first came around. Antonio said it was god, Mary said it was rats and Hugh said it was from being around too many people, or being unfortunate. They weren’t sure how to get rid of the disease it scared them. Some thought whipping themselves others burning themselves and some just not be around the sick people.

Be each week hundreds died. But the disease left after about 3 weeks. William’s family died. He was one of the few survivors.

A couple of years later and only about half the population of Milton had survived. William had more money, so did the other survivors. They found life better and easier. They got more money because there was less of them and no one else sit here to take the job. There was more food for everyone and some of the villains became free because they were able to run away from their mayor. The life for the survivors therefore got better but there was one disadvantage, the memory. The memory of loved ones dying from a painful death.